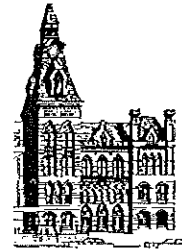




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**Testimony of the City of New Haven
Before the Transportation Committee**

In Support of
**H.B. 6037 AN ACT CONCERNING THE ISSUANCE OF A MOTOR VEHICLE
OPERATOR'S LICENSE TO CERTAIN IMMIGRANTS
and
S.B. 628 AN ACT CONCERNING THE ISSUANCE OF DRIVERS'
LICENSES TO CERTAIN IMMIGRANTS**

Submitted by
John DeStefano, Jr.
March 4, 2013

Senator Maynard, Representative Guerrera, members of the Transportation Committee, welcome to New Haven. I thank you for the opportunity to comment in support of HB 6037, SB 628 and other related bills regarding immigrant access to driver licenses, an important public safety and social justice initiative.

Immigrants that come to this country are hard workers, entrepreneurs that create jobs. It is worth noting that in America between 1990 and 2005 immigrants started 1/4 of all venture backed companies. Frankly, New Haven and Connecticut benefit from the restrictive immigration policies of other nations. Population growth is essential to wealth creation, and in New Haven and in America; immigration has consistently driven that growth over our history. Countries that have stagnated, have by and large failed to integrate newcomers into their society and workforce. Connecticut and America are at their best when they are open and welcoming.

In 2007, in an effort to be a more welcoming community and to address key public safety concerns, the City of New Haven began to issue the Elm City ID, a municipal identification card that gives residents access to city services, the ability to open bank accounts and more importantly – helps establish a sense of community connection and identity. In the five years since its inception more than 10,000 cards have been issued, with 10-12 residents getting IDs every week. While the City does not keep track of how many of our residents use consular documents to establish identity and get their ID, some 60 people have used the card as primary identification to open a bank account at START Bank since 2011. One of the most telling effects of the card has been the improved relationships and trust with the police department. We have seen increases in reporting of crime and a greater willingness to cooperate with officers.

Like the municipal ID, granting immigrants driver licenses regardless of immigration status is good policy. Drivers' licenses will reduce the number of uninsured motorists on the road and will establish training and testing standards to ensure driver safety. Moreover, like the Elm City ID, drivers' licenses can help connect immigrants with banking services to help reduce street crime, increase the reporting of crime and help to create a sense of community identity.

A recent report by the California Department of motor vehicles found that unlicensed drivers in California -- the vast majority of whom are illegal immigrants -- are nearly three times as likely to cause a fatal crash as licensed drivers¹. The report indicates that by allowing these individuals to get a drivers license and requiring them to meet the written and driving tests could dramatically improve road safety reducing the number of fatal accidents.

Opponents of the bill argue that immigrants will not be held to the same standards in establishing who they are and granting licenses will lead to greater fraud and security concerns. Having already established a municipal identification card in New Haven, I can assure you that these concerns are unfounded. Working with the Yale Law School and consulates from numerous South American countries, the City established document standards which mirror those established by the federal government for identification. Consular documents are reliable and verifiable.

I thank the committee for your consideration of this matter and urge passage of this common sense public safety policy.

¹ <http://articles.latimes.com/2013/jan/16/local/la-me-unlicensed-20130116>